

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BAMA KO

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FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: APOP, ML

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING GLOBAL
PROBLEMS -- POPULATION GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: (A) STATE 107370, B) STATE 200394

1. OUR ENTIRE WP PROGRAM IN MALI IS FOCUSED ON MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS OF THE RURAL POOR, ON IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RURAL LIFE, AND ON PROMOTING THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF THE COUNTRY. WE HAVE PROJECTS TO INCREASE LIVESTOCK AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND TRAINING, IN RURAL WORKS, RURAL ROADS, AND RURAL HEALTH, AND IN FUNCTIONAL LITERACY. THE MALIAN GOVERNMENT IS PASSIONATELY COMMITTED TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATION, TO DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, AND TO THE RAISING OF THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF ITS CITIZENS. IN THE AREA OF AUGMENTING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, THE MEMBERS OF THE MISSION AND I HAVE A CONTINUING, FRUITFUL DIALOGUE WITH ALL LEVELS OF THE MALIAN LEADERSHIP.

2. THE ELEMENT OF POPULATION CONTROL, HOWEVER, IS ANOTHER MATTER AND MUST BE APPROACHED INDIRECTLY. MALI IS A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

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THAT ATTACHES TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE TO HAVING CHILDREN. AS ELSEWHERE, PRO-NATALIST VALUES ARISE FROM RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, SOCIAL PRESSURE (THE BARREN WOMAN IS AN OUTCAST) STAGGERINGLY HIGH INFANT AND CHILD MORTALITY RATES, THE NEED OF LABOR TO WORK THE FIELDS AND TEND TO LIVESTOCK, AND IGNORANCE. WE BELIEVE THESE VALUES CANNOT BE ORDAINED TO CHANGE BUT WILL ONLY EVOLVE WITH THE GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS. THE ECONOMIC

DEVELOPMENT OF MALI WILL BRING WITH IT A DESIRE TO LIMIT BIRTHS.
IT WILL BE A GRADUAL PROCESS.

3. THE MALIAN LEADERSHIP IS VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE TRADITIONAL VALUES OF ITS PEOPLE FAVORING LARGE BROODS. IT ALSO CONSIDERS THE MALTHUSIAN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOD SUPPLY AND POPULATION DEMAND AS NOT APPLICABLE TO MALI. IN MALIAN EYES THE COUNTRY IS VAST AND THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE SMALL. THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED THAT FAMILY PLANNING IS NOT TO BE USED AS A MEANS OF SOLVING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. RATHER, IT SEES FAMILY PLANNING AS A FACTOR IN BETTER HEALTH, A PART OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH CARE (MCH), PARTICULARLY CHILD-SPACING.

4. FAMILY PLANNING ACTIVITIES WITH THE FOREGOING MOTIVATION BEGAN IN MALI IN 1972 WITH THE REPEAL OF A LAW PROHIBITING THE SALE AND DISTRIBUTION OF CONTRACEPTIVES. A FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC WAS OPENED IN BAMAKO AT THE TIME, AND SINCE THEN FAMILY PLANNING ACTIVITIES HAVE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE 10 CENTERS IN THE BAMAKO AREA AND SEVEN MCH/PP CENTERS IN THE REGIONS OF KAYES, SIKASSO, SEGOU, MOPTI, GAO, AND TIMBUKTU.

5. BIRTH CONTROL IS THUS NOT A "SENSITIVE" SUBJECT IN MALI, BUT THE "DIALOGUE" MUST TAKE PLACE ON MALIAN TERMS, IN THE MALIAN CONTEXT. OUR SPECIFIC AID PROJECTS FIT IN NICELY: THE MALI RURAL HEALTH PROJECT WILL WORK TO EXPAND HEALTH SERVICES, INCLUDING

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MCH/FP, TO THE RURAL AREAS. THE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA PROJECT WILL MAKE AVAILABLE IMPROVED POPULATION DATA TO THE MALIAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION-MAKERS. AND OUR GENERAL ACTIVITIES IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT WILL HAVE A LONG-TERM IMPACT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THEREFORE ON ATTITUDES.

6. SO FAR AS A "DIALOGUE" IS CONCERNED, I TAKE EVERY POSSIBLE OCCASION WITH MALIANS OF ALL LEVELS TO URGE THE VALUE OF LIMITING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY, USING THE ARGUMENTS OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY. THESE OPENINGS ARE INFORMAL, FOR A FORMAL "DIALOGUE" WOULD BE OUT OF PLACE AND UNPRODUCTIVE. I SHALL CONTINUE TO TAKE THIS LINE. MEANWHILE OUR AID PROGRAMS WILL HELP CHANGE THE FUNDAMENTAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT. I AM CONVINCED THAT AN APPROACH INVOLVING THE IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN EXPANSION OF HEALTH SERVICES IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO INFLUENCE PRO-NATALIST BELIEFS IN THE DIRECTION OF POPULATION PLANNING.

BYRNE

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